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REVIEWS.

AN EARLY HYMN OF LORD MACAULAY'S.

We owe to the kindness of Mr. Lionel Horton-Smith, whom the readers of this REVIEW know in connection with his classical studies, a reprint of an article, published by him in the *London Scottish Regimental Gazette*, of which he is one of the editors, for June, 1897, containing a facsimile of an early hymn of Lord Macaulay's. We should have been able to present our readers with this facsimile, but for the fact that the precocious poet's handwriting sprawls far beyond the limits of one of our pages. We are constrained, however, to give the hymn in print, for we feel sure that such a literary curiosity will prove of interest to every one, and especially to those readers of Sir George Trevelyan's delightful "Life and Letters," who felt that they would willingly have had a few stanzas from hymns pronounced by Mrs. Hannah More to be "quite extraordinary for such a baby." Quite extraordinary were the lines from the poem on Olaus Magnus, King of Norway, quoted by Trevelyan; but they seem to be somewhat later than the hymn shortly to be given, and after all it is just as well to strengthen the published evidence for as remarkable a case of precocity as is on record. Milton's early paraphrases of the Psalms strike us with surprise, but what are we to say of Macaulay's hymn? It is not great poetry; perhaps Matthew Arnold could have detected in it the germs of the pinchbeck verse he so inveighed against, but at least it helps to prove that Thomas Babington Macaulay is entitled to rank with, if not above, Abraham Cowley as a youthful prodigy. We shall now quote from Mr. Horton-Smith's introductory remarks and follow them with the hymn:

Thomas Babington Macaulay, son of Zachary Macaulay, and grandson of Rev. John Macaulay, of Cardross, was born on October 25, 1800. "From the time that he was three years old," writes his nephew, Sir G. O. Trevelyan, "he read incessantly." Nor did he confine himself to reading; even in his earliest boyhood he was forever committing to paper the lucubrations of his youthful brain.

There exists an unpublished letter from the aforesaid Zachary to Dr. Kenneth Macaulay, dated 10th September, 1808 (now in possession of Miss Rose Adelaide Macaulay, of 6 Oakland's Grove, Shepherd's Bush, W., granddaughter of the said Dr. Kenneth Macaulay), wherein the father describes the various compositions of his "dear Tom," who was not yet eight years old! Toward the end of this letter we read: "He has composed I know not how many hymns. I send you one as a specimen in his own handwriting, which he wrote about six months ago [at the age of seven years and six months], on one Sunday morning while we were at breakfast."

The unpublished letter here mentioned is, curiously enough, in many places absolutely identical with the letter which, also dated September, 1808, is ascribed by Sir G. O. Trevelyan ("Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay," vol. i., ch. i., pp. 30*f.*) to Lord Macaulay's mother.

"Quite extraordinary for such a baby," is the judgment passed by Mrs. Hannah More on these early hymns of Lord Macaulay (see Trevelyan, *op. cit.*, vol. i., ch. i., p. 32.) Her judgment is enough for us. We have simply to endorse it.

A HYMN.

Almighty God of all below,
Thou canst protect from every foe.
The Heavens are made by thy great Hands,
One word of thee the Earth commands. [? thine.]

2

Some men make Gods of red and blue,
And rob their Sovereign of his due:
The good shall go to Heaven. The fell,
Hosts of thy wrath can bear to hell. [? blasts.]

3

Thy wrath is like a burning fire;
Thy Goodness all the good admire;
Thy Word restores the dawning day;
At Thy Command bright lightnings play.

4

The Birds that chirp their morning songs,
That Breath of Praise to thee belongs.
These, by thy mercy always fed
Teach us to beg our daily bread.

5

Ye Mortals loud resound your King;
And while that powerful God you sing,
Oh! be your Hearts and Tongues the Same
While singing the Almighty name!

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